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NRO and USAF review(s) completed.

TOP SECRETPROPOSED DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE R-X

The schedule proposed by the Air Force for the procurement and deployment of the R-X would obviously be impossible of accomplishment if substantial progress in development of the aircraft had not already been made. (It can now be revealed that the proposed R-X is to be developed as an outgrowth of the X-31, a secret experimental aircraft of very high performance and advanced technical concept.)

(The X-31 program was started in mid-1959) as the result of a proposal by Lockheed that was notable for its advanced technical concepts. Coupled with this was Lockheed's unique management proposal which indicated the job could be done within a significantly shorter period of time than is generally considered acceptable and with the resultant savings in dollars. There were in this proposal several items of not only proprietary interest to LAC but of far reaching consequences to the defense posture of the United States, and it was therefore decided that any future steps taken in relation to this program would be on an extremely classified need to know basis.

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Inasmuch as the structure and design of the proposal presented an entirely new approach and also appeared to have possibilities as an LRI (Long Range Interceptor) as well as considerable potential for a post strike decoy or decoy strike vehicle, it was decided to exploit these possibilities and to go ahead in early 1960 with a prototype program in the simplest configuration.

This also motivated the decision to continue the work on the ASG-18/CAL-9 fire control and weapon system originally slated for the now cancelled F-108.

Due primarily to the Lockheed management approach plus special contractual procedures and commitments (within the Air Force) this vehicle is well ahead of what normally could be considered an accelerated schedule.

In March of 1961 the program was reviewed by the present administration and the decision was made to continue under the same ground rules. Its post strike decoy and decoy strike capabilities were recently given major consideration due to the uncertainties surrounding the B-70.

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The Air Force for the first time in its history now finds itself in the singular position of having a vehicle whose basic design readily lends itself to a diversity of purposes with only the most minor of modifications and little change in performance.

Taking advantage of this diversity the Secretary of Defense has decided that one of the major applications of the X-21 will be in the role of a strategic reconnaissance vehicle. In this role, the aircraft, now designated the R-X, will have a refueled range comparable to the RS-70, greater speed and altitude, and a smaller, but adequate, payload. Its development and procurement costs will be a small fraction of those for the RS-70. Because of the fact that many of the technical components necessary for reconnaissance are still beyond the current state of the art, it is not possible to commit to a reconnaissance strike system at this time. At first the R-X will be designed simply as a reconnaissance aircraft. This is an important role for future manned strategic aircraft, and is required to give us a desirable strategic flexibility.

It is anticipated that system testing of the X-21 will be done at Edwards Air Force Base commencing not before late Spring of 1961.

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